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ABSTRACT

A cooperative approach to mainstreaming between a school for the deaf and a nearby regional Occupational Education Center of the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in New York State was investigated in four programs representing local variations of this model for partial mainstreaming. Three distinct periods of the mainstreaming effort were isolated for study: the period of selection, the period of orientation, and the period of articulation (when communications concerning learner needs and progress are being coordinated between the two facilities and home). Interviews were conducted with 120 administrator-supervisors, pupil personnel workers, and teachers. Among findings were that the need for information about the types and content of courses at the BOCES Centers receives the most attention; that the personnel in both participating institutions make little or no distinction between selection and orientation activities; and that communication between the two institutions does not appear to be a major concern in the day-to-day operation of the cooperative program. (SBH)

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PUPIL SELECTION AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

PROBLEMS IN MAINSTREAMING THE HANDICAPPED CHILD

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This study is one segment of a more comprehensive, continuing research project involving the survey of characteristics for mainstreaming deaf students in secondary level occupational education programs.* The particular model being studied is a cooperative approach to mainstreaming between a school for the deaf and a nearby regional Occupational Education Center of the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) in New York State.

The four programs in the study represent local variations of this model for partial mainstreaming. In this arrangement, students in each of the four locations are enrolled both in a school for the deaf (the home school) and with hearing students in regular occupational courses at the nearby BOCES Occupational Education Center. Students who elect to participate in this program divide their school day between occupational education courses at the regional Occupational Education Center and academic courses at their home school. Since the courses of study at the Occupational Education Centers generally require two years to complete most of the students are secondary level juniors and seniors.

This paper is concerned with the preliminary results of the inquiry into the nature and extent of the communication between the secondary level staff at the home school and the staff at the BOCES Occupational Education Center. Communication among school personnel who are engaged in the instruction of the handicapped is essential in planning and implementing student learning experiences and in assessing student progress toward the desired educational outcomes. This is a task of some magnitude when only the staff of one school are involved. In the cooperative approach, where the instructional effort encompasses the involvement of school personnel in two quite different educational settings, the problems

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*This three year study is being supported by the Bureau for the Education of the Handicapped, U.S. Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the U.S. Office of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Office of Education should be inferred.

of establishing and maintaining the channels of communication are magnified.

Making decisions about the nature and extent of mainstreaming handicapped young people in the educative process is a complex matter. It is becoming increasingly evident that mainstreaming the handicapped is an individualized concern that encompasses a variety of considerations. Total integration or total separation in a specialized school are only the extreme possibilities. Between these two extremes lie a limitless variety of arrangements. Mainstreaming has to be concerned with accommodating and adapting the educational experience to different settings and conditions and in varying degrees. This, of course, implies continual dialogue between the school and the home. The communicative complexities in inter-institutional cooperation as well as the necessity for maintaining close contact with the home make the investigation of this dimension of the cooperative approach particularly important.

Three distinct periods of the mainstreaming effort were isolated for study: (1) the period of selection during which time consideration is given to the informational needs of students and their parents in determining the appropriateness of a student's participation in occupational education mainstreaming, (2) the period of orientation encompassing that time when the students are becoming acclimated to a second instructional environment (including its program routines and procedures, the features and layout of the plant, and the teachers and other school personnel with whom they will work); and (3) the period of articulation when communication concerning learner needs and progress are being coordinated between the two facilities and the home.

Personnel in all eight institutions (the home school and the Occupational Education Center in each of the four survey sites) were interviewed. Table 1 shows the distribution of the 120 interviewees by type of school and by job classification.

TABLE 1

Interviewees by Type of School and Job Classification

Job Classification	Schools for the Deaf A	B	C	D	Occupational Education Centers A	B	C	D	Total
Administrator-Supervisor	3	5	7	5	11	5	4	5	45
Pupil Personnel Worker	3	12	6	14	8	2	3	2	50
Teachers	1	5	2	4	3	3	4	3	25
Total	7	22	15	23	22	10	11	10	120

All administrative-supervisory and pupil personnel workers were interviewed in each location. Classroom teachers in the home schools and teachers in the BOCES Centers who had deaf students in their classes were randomly selected. Interviews with administrative-supervisory and pupil personnel workers were conducted in the Fall, 1976; interviews with the teachers in the Spring, 1977.

The interview was utilized for its several distinct advantages over other possible methods, particularly the questionnaire. It provided a means whereby, within a specified structure, a wide range of communication behaviors and practices between the two facilities could be identified. The potential for in-depth information provided the opportunity to explore in detail both the cognitive and the affective dimensions of the interviewee's behavior. We needed to ascertain not only what these school people were doing but how they felt about what they were doing. We wanted to know what they liked and disliked about their activities in these areas, what their problems were, what they found satisfying or dissatisfying, what they would do again and what they would change. The interviewers were trained in the use of listening, clarifying, reflecting, probing, interpreting, verifying and questioning as a means of promoting cooperation and participation, seeking information, or controlling

and directing the interview. Also, since the interview could employ a variety of question types (open-ended, dichotomous, scaled), it offered the structural flexibility to accommodate both the specific and general types of information we were seeking.

Both an interview schedule and an interview protocol were developed to guide the interviewing process. The interview protocol described the overall purpose of the interview, offered general guidelines in preparing for and conducting the interview and provided specific information for dealing with each question in the interview situation (its purpose, parameters and possible problems). The importance of the protocol in dealing with interviewer responses and in making judgments about what to record on the schedule cannot be over-emphasized. Interviewers were expected to be thoroughly familiar with the purpose and parameters of the questions. Being secure in the types of information which were being sought made it possible for the interviewers to concentrate on the content of the interviewee's remarks and, consequently, enabled them to judge better what information to record.

A separate interview protocol and schedule were developed for each of the three job classifications shown in Table 1. In this way, the interview schedule was geared to the work role of the interviewees while the protocol alerted the interviewers to some of the anticipated differences in the types of activities or problems encountered that might be unique to each work-role group.

The interview schedule served as the recording device for the interviewer. Space for demographic information was provided on the cover sheet. Interviewers were expected to follow the standardized wording and sequence of the questions on the schedule. However, after the initial question introducing a topic had been asked, interviewers were at liberty to use such other communication leads as they felt appropriate to fulfill the purpose of the question.

During the Summer of 1977, the interview data was coded and analyzed. A random sample of the interview schedules was used to identify the types and range of information obtained in the responses of administrator-supervisor, pupil personnel worker and teacher groups. These responses were reviewed, categories of responses were identified and a system for coding the interview data was established. The interview data was coded and the SPSS computer program was utilized to provide the basic frequencies for the analysis of these data. The first year findings are reported with reference to three major periods in the mainstreaming effort - selection, orientation and articulation.

The Period of Selection

The data for the period of selection are being examined in relation to the informational function of the school and the decision making activities associated with the determination of student participation in the cooperative program. The first year data, although preliminary, show some of the similarities and differences that exist among the groups of school personnel interviewed. These similarities and differences are reflected in the informational activities conducted at the four research sites and in the procedures followed in helping students and their parents consider the options for mainstreaming in occupational education.

The information function. Four areas of information were identified as basic to the mainstreaming decision. First, providing deaf students in the home school with information about the types and content of courses offered at the BOCES Occupational Education Center was deemed important by 89% of the personnel interviewed. Second, information about the environment at the Occupational Education Center (the physical setting, types of facilities, working conditions) was mentioned by 27% of all personnel. BOCES Center personnel (32%) considered this more important than personnel in the schools for the deaf (15%). A third

area, information about future job opportunities, was mentioned by 23% of all interviewees. Again, BOCES Center personnel (28%) believed that deaf students should have an awareness of future jobs they could anticipate with occupational training while 18% of the personnel at the school for the deaf identified this student need. A fourth area, knowledge of one's interests and abilities, was cited by 16% of all personnel interviewed. In addition, several other areas of information were identified by comparatively smaller percentages of personnel (in most instances by less than 5%).

Three techniques for providing needed information about the BOCES Centers to prospective students were mentioned frequently by all the personnel: (1) having students tour the BOCES Center individually as part of an "open house" program (50%); (2) conferencing with students individually in an information-oriented session (39%); and (3) distributing brochures or bulletins that describe the BOCES Center course offerings (31%). A significant percentage of interviewees (26%) did not know what techniques were used to disseminate information to students. Although the number of techniques mentioned by the interviewees in each of three groups varied, the responses among the groups were quite similar. There were no major differences in the techniques used among the four research sites. Each site utilized these three major techniques employing their own unique variation.

When considering parental needs for information about the BOCES Centers, similar areas of information were identified. The combined groups of school personnel (81%) cited information about the types and content of courses offered at the BOCES Center as the primary need. Awareness of future job opportunities was mentioned by 30%, information about the BOCES environment by 22%, and knowledge of the student's interests and abilities (21%).

School personnel were less informed about the techniques for providing parents with needed information with 43% of the interviewees indicating they

did not know how this information was communicated to parents. Administrators-supervisors seemed to be most familiar with the methods for disseminating this information to parents while classroom teachers were the least informed. Approximately 80% of the classroom teachers had no knowledge of how parents were informed about the BOCES option.

Techniques similar to those used to transmit information to students were employed in communicating information to parents. Meetings for and conferences with parents (31%), visits or tours of the BOCES Center (26%), circulation of brochures and bulletins (19%) constituted the major activities for providing parents with information.

Of the four major areas identified with the informational function, only one, the need to become familiar with the types and content of courses at the BOCES Center, was consistently mentioned by all school personnel. The dissemination techniques that the institutions employed were geared primarily to meet this need. The other three areas were identified by 16%-27% of those interviewed. It would appear that the personnel contacted in this study do not perceive these three need areas as primary foci of the informational function. On the other hand, the relevance of these informational areas to the decisions being made by students in the target population of this study is obvious. Thus, if these areas are relegated less emphasis in the informational function of the school program, it can be assumed that the needs are being targeted in other areas of the educative endeavor. To explore how these informational needs are otherwise provided for and to ascertain how students and their parents use this information in determining whether or not to participate in the mainstreaming experience at the BOCES Centers, we elected to explore the decision making process in detail.

The decision making process. The decision to participate in the cooperative program has been considered one of the crucial elements of our investigation.

With the enactment of Public Law 94-142 mandating individual educational planning, the factors involved in developing short and long term goals and in considering the possibilities for mainstreaming students, in any full or partial manner, have assumed even greater significance. Since students and their parents must be intimately involved in the determination of educational goals, the study of decision-making processes and procedures seems appropriate and timely.

One section of the interview schedule was directed at eliciting information concerning the procedures that are used to help students and their parents make (1) the decision to enroll in the cooperative occupational education program and (2) the choice of an occupational course of study to pursue. In particular, we intend to identify the factors which are considered in the mainstreaming decision and in the choice of the course to pursue.

The interview data for the first year of the study has been helpful in some respects and disappointing in others. Approximately two out of five (41%) of the personnel interviewed were unfamiliar with the procedures used in helping deaf students make the decision to enroll in the program. Likewise, approximately one-half (47%) were unfamiliar with the procedures used to help students make the choice of a course of study. One significant finding was evident: the administrator-supervisor group was best informed. Teachers were least informed with 68% indicating they had no knowledge of the decision making procedures. Most of the interviewees referred to informational techniques (tours, conferences, publications) or indicated the involvement of school counselors. In one research site, a full year exploratory program, under mainstreaming conditions, is provided. In this program, students can elect to participate in several exploratory occupational education experiences. This program would appear to serve many informational and experiential needs. Yet, its potential meaning in the decision making process remains to be explored. In two other locations, we identified the

use of a committee who evaluated the student's abilities, interests and aptitudes and who made recommendations for participation in the BOCES program. In general, then, we identified a potpourri of procedures and techniques that are presumably used in making decisions about participation in the cooperative program. These four techniques were commonly employed: (1) individual and group counseling; (2) exploratory activities in a variety of occupational areas; (3) use of standardized tests to evaluate student interests and aptitudes; and (4) committee evaluation of student records.

At this time, we can only conclude that considerable confusion exists between the informational function and the decision making process. Even though we were able to ascertain that counseling with students and conferencing with parents are provided and that interests and abilities are measured or assessed, we have yet to identify what specific factors are considered, what kinds of help are extended, how often help is provided or who is involved. We are currently in the process of gathering data which will aid in clarifying and detailing the dynamics of the decision making process.

Some parents perceive occupational education as an indication of poor academic ability. The parents of deaf students who elect to enroll in an occupational education program often approve the decision but express a concern for the future of their child. They feel that unless their child can complete an academic course of study, he/she will never be able to "get ahead." We asked our interviewees what attitudes toward occupational education programs had been communicated to them by students and parents in past years. Of the entire population interviewed, 54% reported that students had positive attitudes toward the occupational education program while 8% reported negative attitudes. Of the remaining interviewees, 22% indicated neither positive nor negative attitudes and 16% were uninformed. In comparing the perceptions of teachers in

the home schools with those in the occupational education centers, 46% of the home school teachers and 64% of the Center teachers reported positive student attitudes.

With regard to parental attitudes toward occupational education, less definitive results were reported. A large percentage of teachers in the schools for the deaf (39%) and in the Centers (28%) were uninformed. Most of the teachers had not had contacts with parents where this information would be made available to them. However, of those who were aware of parent attitudes, 30% of the teachers in schools for the deaf and 51% of the Center teachers reported positive attitudes. Only 5% of the home school teachers and 4% of the Center teachers indicated negative parental attitudes.

This data, combined with the rather large percentage of classroom teachers who were either uninformed about or uninvolved in the informational function for parents, leads us to conclude that classroom teachers, especially classroom teachers in the BOCES Centers, have little communication with parents. This conclusion is being reinforced by data in other aspects of our survey.

The Period of Orientation

The period of orientation is defined as that period of time when the students are becoming acclimated to the environment at the BOCES Center. In general, orientation activities are designed to help students cope with problems of adjusting to a new plant, program and personnel (the 3 P's).

Approximately one-half (46%) of the personnel interviewed were unfamiliar with the types of information provided students in the orientation period and one-third (33%) had no knowledge about the techniques used to orient students to their new environment. Most of the interviewees in all four sites and in all personnel groups were unable to differentiate between the informational activities used to foster the decision making process in the period of selection and those used to ease the transition from total separation to partial mainstreaming.

Classroom teachers, the personnel whose day-to-day contact with students would make them most aware of orientation needs, were less knowledgeable than the pupil personnel specialists. The administrator-supervisor group were the most informed.

Although the deaf students enrolled in the cooperative occupational education program are participating in a mainstreaming experience for the first time, it appears that group orientation activities for these students are minimal. On the other hand, it would appear that student needs are considered on an individual basis. In each of the four research sites, a program coordinator, sometimes referred to as a program liaison, has been employed. The program coordinator spends a considerable amount of time working with individual students and their teachers. As problems occur, they are referred to the coordinator. It appears that the orientation needs of students are left to chance. If problems emerge, and they do regularly, the coordinator becomes involved. Thus, the role of the coordinator in student orientation merges with those activities that might be more clearly articulative. Nonetheless, we interpret the void in providing orientation activities as a possible source of continuing difficulty in the mainstreaming process. We feel that it is possible to differentiate between matters of environmental adjustment and the problems of program articulation.

As to the orientation needs of parents, even less attention has been given to their involvement. It is assumed that their needs have been met through the informational activities provided in the selection period. The parent is not an involved, contributing partner who can help (or who may need help) in bridging the adjustment to the mainstreaming experience. Parents are not alerted to the different routines, experiences or behaviors which may affect their child's daily existence.

The Period of Articulation

As students settle into their programs at the Centers, their progress and achievements as well as their problems or learning deficiencies become a matter involving personnal in both institutions. Equally, there is the need to maintain communication with the home. In the cooperative model, as in any program where partial mainstreaming is a feature, a measure of the program's success is dependent on the communication between the institutions and among the personnel involved.

We developed one set of questions focusing on instructional articulation. We directed these questions at a variety of articulation concerns - curriculum, student progress, school routines and special problems with parents. We began our inquiry into articulation by asking our interviewees how the teachers communicated. Approximately 25% of the personnel interviewed did not know how the teachers communicated. Another 25% stated that little or no communication existed between teachers at the Centers and teachers at the schools for the deaf. In all four research sites, the program coordinator was cited as a central figure in the communicative process. In communicating about student needs, the program coordinator was cited by 57% of the interviewees; in communicating about curricular programs, the coordinator was cited by 34%; with reference to student progress, by 29% of the interviewees; in communicating about special problems with parents by 29% and in communicating about school routines by 33%. In only one of these instances was the communicative role of the program coordinator exceeded by another means. In communicating about student progress, more school personnel (38%) cited the use of report cards or written statements. It is obvious from these data, that the program coordinator serves as the communicative liaison between the institutions. BOCES Center personnel emphasized this aspect of the program coordinator's role more than the personnel in the schools for the deaf. In the schools for the deaf, personnel made additional reference to the use of pupil personnel specialists and administrative staff.

Interviewees were asked to identify the problems that existed in the communications between the two institutions. A large percentage of the interviewees indicated that they were not aware of any existing problems. In the area of student needs, 32% were unaware of any communication problems; in curricular programs, 31%; in student progress, 45%; in special problems with parents, 45%; and in school routines, 48%. Another large group of interviewees (approximately one-third) were sufficiently uninformed indicating that they didn't know whether or not problems existed in these areas. Thus, those who "didn't know" and those who felt "no problems" existed accounted for the bulk of the responses.

A few communication problems were identified although each problem was cited by small percentages of interviewees. They were: (1) no common free time for the teachers in both institutions; (2) the teachers in one institution did not know the teachers in the other institution; (3) a lack of support personnel to work with student problems and to promote communication between the teachers in the two institutions; (4) the distance between the two institutions inhibited joint teacher conferences or meetings; (5) information about students was distorted as it was communicated through the channels; (6) differences in school policy tended to block communication; (7) it was difficult to contact the program coordinator.

When responses of personnel at the schools for the deaf were compared with those at the BOCES Centers, it became apparent that twice as many personnel in schools for the deaf "did not know" what problems existed. Conversely, a higher percentage of BOCES Center personnel stated that "no problems" existed. Since there was little uniformity in the problems identified among the four sites, it appears that the existing problems are unique to each location. Further, it would appear that, aside from the few unique problems identified in each location,

a substantial number of personnel in both institutions at each site do not feel that communication is a barrier in articulating different facets of the program.

One set of questions was concerned with the coordination of the program activities such as program planning, student scheduling, busing, or setting up special events. In this regard, interviewees were asked to identify key personnel who were involved in the coordinating function. Although personnel holding many different job titles were cited, the program coordinator was mentioned most frequently in all instances. Less often, but in significant numbers, were the supervisors of vocational and academic education in the schools for the deaf. It seems that much of the day-to-day operation of the cooperative program is consumed in the role of the program coordinators. Others may become involved as problems need attention but the articulation required in maintaining the endeavor is largely their responsibility.

Summary of Preliminary Findings

The period of selection. Four major areas constitute the basic informational needs of students and their parents. Of these four areas, the need for information about the types and content of courses at the BOCES Centers receives the most attention. The other three areas of information appear to be provided in other aspects of the educative process at the home schools. The decision making process and the involvement of school personnel, parents and the student is less clearly developed. It seems that administrators-supervisors, with some help from counselors, carry the major responsibility for working with students and their parents in making decisions about participation in the cooperative occupational education program. The role of the pupil personnel specialists and classroom teachers in the informational function and in the decision making process is ambiguous. The findings suggest a need for more coordination between

the two participating institutions in planning and conducting informational and decision making activities. It appears that the BOCES Centers are more active in the informational function while the schools for the deaf conduct the decision making activities.

The period of orientation. The findings show that the personnel in both participating institutions make little or no distinction between selection and orientation activities. Further, the techniques used to provide information during the period of selection were considered as serving the orientation needs of students enrolled in the program. Once the deaf students are enrolled in the cooperative program, little formal attention is given to the development of activities that would assist them in making an initial adjustment to their new program and new environment. It appears that orientation problems are handled on an individual basis as students with problems are identified. The orientation needs and problems of students are largely the responsibility of the program coordinator.

The period of articulation. Communication between the two institutions does not appear to be a major concern in the day-to-day operation of the cooperative program. Substantial numbers of school personnel in both institutions indicated "no problems" in communication or that they "didn't know" whether or not problems existed. The program coordinators are viewed as the primary agents of inter-institutional communication. The coordination and articulation required to maintain the day-to-day operation of the program is largely the responsibility of the program coordinators.